KUSAIEN POSSESSIVES AS RELATIVE CLAUSES: A NEW APPROACH

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The Kusaien[1] possessive construction was previously discussed in my paper (1969b) in terms of grammatical and semantic classifiers which occur with the noun and possessive pronoun suffix and characterized as shown in Figure 1[2].

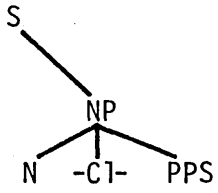

Fig. 1

Consider the Kusaien sentence [kom eysək læ bouk], 'You burned my hands'. Figure 2 gives the surface structure of this sentence, hereafter called Sentence A.

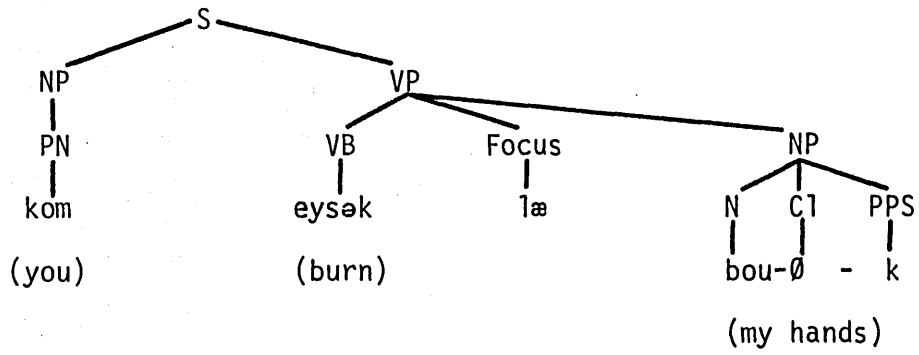

Fig. 2 Sentence A

Let us consider Sentence A in the manner suggested by Jacobs and Rosenbaum (1968:231) that the genitive (in this case [bouk]) originates in the deep structure as a relative clause. Thus [bouk] would be interpreted as 'the hands which I have' as shown in Figure 3.

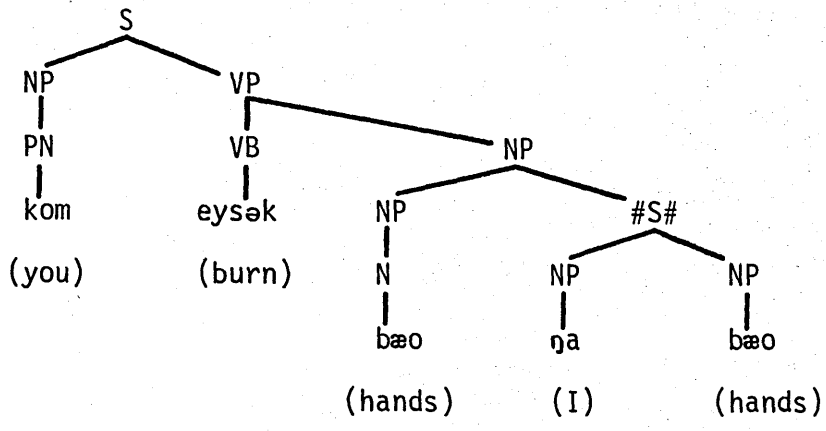

Fig. 3

At first glance a person unfamiliar with the internal structure of Kusaien might find this deep structure acceptable. Unfortunately the tree looks only appropriate on paper. First of all consider the noun [bæo]. One of the features of Kusaien is that nouns seldom if ever occur in free form, i.e. they must always occur with the appropriate classifier and possessive pronoun suffix (in the case of possessives) or with the appropriate object suffix (Vesper 1969a) or with a numeral (Vesper 1970), locative or directional marker (Vesper 1969a). It is only in data-gathering situations that one finds this noun in the form of [bæo]. The possessive paradigm for [bæo] is given in Figure 4.

Free form	bæo
my hands	bouk
your(sg) hands	boum
his/her hands	bæol
our hands (excl)	bæoš
our hands (incl)	bæoškeywa
your hands(pl)	bɒum
their hands	bæoltæl

Figure 4

An argument could be presented here similar to the one proposed by Langacker for French (1968: 186-7). In part Langacker suggests that through 'various syntactic rules' one can establish 'an abstract structure' of two possessive expressions, which he feels are syntactically similar and which 'manifest the same underlying structure'. Similarly for Kusaien, it is possible to propose using the free form of the noun

e.g. [bæo] in the deep structure and then through a series of rules produce the surface form [bouk] or any of the forms given in Figure 4. Langacker's suggestions concerning deletion rules could be carried even further in establishing syntactic relationships between sentences, i.e. assume that the underlying structure is given in X and through various reduction rules one eventually arrives at those given in Y. This procedure may have merit but it fails to show any semantic relationships. Instead, semantics is used to support the deep structure.

In Kusaien since no noun occurs in free form it is possible to consider the possessive pronoun suffixes (and additionally the object suffixes, numerals, locative and directional markers) as being restrictives, or markers of 'definiteness'. In support of this Lyons (1969:395) contends that 'locatives, possessives and existential sentences are inter-connected in a variety of languages'.

If the free form were possible (say in terms of Langacker) as a deep structure representation, then the suggested embedded sentence yields the existential relationship usually associated with to be but not the relationship associated with have. One of the criticisms of the embedded construction as shown in Fig. 3 is that it is not an acceptable equational sentence although this is not the main concern on this paper. The point here is that the embedded sentence does not give any information concerning 'having' and thus is not a satisfactory embedding for the relative clause assumption. According to Lyons, those who accept the so-called 'common assumption' accept the notion that have is a deep structure verb. Kusaien has no verb equivalent to the English have. There also appears no way of writing the Kusaien equivalent of 'the hands which I have'. Consequently, there seems little need to worry whether have is a deep structure verb and whether it fails or passes the passive transformation test.

In Kusaien, the notion of 'having' exists in the possessive construction and, additionally, the related forms [oaš] and [wæŋin]. Consider the following sentences given below as Sentences B.

oaš lɔmseyl	'He has houses'
tə oaš lɔmseyl	'He had houses'
wæŋin lɔmseyl	'He does not have houses'

Sentences B

A first approximation might lead one to draw an invalid conclusion that [oaš] is equivalent to the English verb have and that [wæŋin] is equivalent to have + not. Observe the [-l] suffix which occurs in each of these sentences in [lɔmseyl]. Data shows that [lɔmseyl] is definitely the same type of possessive construction cited in Figure 1, but because the possessive construction occurs with [oaš] or [wæŋin], the focus or emphasis of the sentence changes so that there is a different relationship marked. The difference in the focus of Sentence A and those given in Sentences B may be compared.

Observe in Sentence A that the full verb [eysək] is preceded by a pronoun subject [kom]. Following the verb, a marker labeled focus appears which precedes the possessive construction. This focus marker [læ] occurs in other data not given here and seems to mark the subject of the verb as an instrumental. When the focus marker occurs, there is always a specified agent and the possessive construction can be realized in terms of the patient or receiver. Thus, one has an agent + instrumental + patient construction.

In Sentences B there is no agent or instrumental verb i.e. one never has a noun or pronoun subject preceding [oas] or [wæŋin].[3] [oas] and [wæŋin] are, in effect, signal markers of existence or non-existence of the possessed object respectively. [oas] and [wæŋin] always cooccur with the possessive construction given in Figure 1. Thought of in these terms, the 'subject' of the construction would be 'houses' and a characteristic of 'houses' would be that someone possesses them, i.e. 'his house', with the [-l] suffix (in this case) marking the person doing the possessing. In a more generalized view of possession [oas] and [wæŋin] can be considered focus markers just as one considers [læ].

Focus is more than a syntactic complexity of the possession problem in Kusaien. In fact, the co-occurrence of a focus marker with the possessive construction given in Figure 1 suggests that the underlying possession representations need to be considered in different terms than the syntactic. For example he discusses the 'states' of alienable and inalienable. Briefly he characterized inalienable as a state 'necessarily associated with particular persons and objects' and alienable as a state that is temporarily or contingently associated with particular persons and objects' (1969:301). His examples are 'John's father' (inalienable) and 'John's book' (alienable). A Kusaien's relationship to his land [ænsiək] when referring to his birthplace and his origin could be considered inalienable. The actual owner of the land may be someone other than the person and yet the person may be buried in this area where other family members are buried which, in a sense, makes it 'his land'. The land itself may be bought or sold, but ones 'possession' of it is inalienable even though such transactions generally make the possessed object alienable, if one accepts Lyons' definitions of the two states.

In Kusaien, it is the possessed object and the cultural context in which it occurs which must always be considered in determining alienable and inalienable. Focus markers (such as læ, oas, and wæŋin) show the nature of the emphasis in a possessive construction but the contingent or necessary association is not affected by them.

It seems more fruitful to deal directly with the semantic level in analyzing Kusaien possessives, thus eliminating the need for a syntactic deep structure. At a deeper level, it is the existence of the notion of possession that is relevant. This so-called deeper level can be looked upon as the level of semantics. It is the interpretation at this level which gives insight to the conceptual categorization of the language. The surface level, on the other hand, merely articulates the information the semantics yield. Conceptual categorization gives in-

formation on how the world is divided up and within each of the categories there needs to be additional subcategorization which gives a level of appropriate usage, i.e. the 'when' and 'where' certain surface representations are used. The question then is how does one incorporate this kind of semantic analysis in a grammar?

One suggestion (perhaps impossible to implement) would be to provide a semantic component using the lexicon as the base which would replace the present deep structure syntactic component. With the lexicon as the central component of such a grammar a fine-grained system of semantic features would subcategorize levels of semantics including within the realm of semantics, a level of appropriate usage. Such a semantic-based lexical analysis would hope to provide insight into such questions as: What circumstances and what co-occurrence rules exist with each noun to be marked, for example, as alienable possession? In what contextual situation is one pronoun form chosen over another in a language where honorifics are culturally embedded in kinship relationships and in other cases determined by class membership? In other words, every word in the language is defined according to its semantic criteria and then appropriate features are assigned to each word, thus constituting a conceptual category. An example of the need for this can be seen in a semantic interpretation of the Kusaien possessive [ænsiək], 'This is my land', which is not reflected in the grammatical structure, and especially not in the English gloss accompanying it. Semantically, [ænsiək] means (in part) 'my place of origin', 'land to which I have title', 'a place where I live', 'a place where I have a garden', 'a place where I own trees', and 'a place owned by a close relative in which I have the right to get food'.

The idea of using the lexicon as the central component of a grammar does not originate entirely with this paper, although it was an idea developed independently during this investigation. Gruber (1967) suggests this as a means of obtaining semantic as well as syntactic relationships from a base component. One of Gruber's fundamental assumptions is 'the unity of syntax and semantics by the exclusion of interpretive semantic markers in favor of formalizing all of semantics that can be formalized in terms of the categorical trees generated in the base component' (1967:20).

The mechanics for a lexicon base grammar of Kusaien are more incomplete than even the sketch Gruber has proposed for English. For the present, only Gruber's notion that the lexicon serve as the central component of a grammar will be accepted. It will further be assumed that the base has syntactic and semantic representations which are linguistically the same.

It seems to me that one of the first tasks of the linguist would be to establish categories and subcategories. In attempting to do this one has to take into consideration some basic linguistic principles related in a broad sense to the 'emics' of the language. In doing so, one needs to distinguish between categories which are language-specific and others which are universally found. Any category becomes language-specific when a particular set of cultural phenomena is defined by them. If other sets of cultural phenomena occurring in other languages are

defined in an identical manner, they are candidates for universal categories. The categorical meaning of a word becomes language-specific when it is characterized in terms of the native speaker's cultural knowledge and use of the language.

This paper has discussed earlier some possibilities which could be considered further in terms of categorization. For example, one can reconsider Agent, Instrument, and Patient in terms of semantic categories along with categories of alienable and inalienable, which, of course, are not entirely language-specific to Kusaien but probably are universally found.

The complexity of categorization immediately presents problems. Obviously the broader the category, the greater the possibility that it will be non-unique to the language. On the other hand, the more cultural insight one has, the more fine-grained and language-specific the categories become. The inclusion of a level of appropriate usage is not universally regarded as semantics. Perhaps this may be partially attributed to the problems encountered when trying to incorproate such evidence effectively in a grammar. Recall earlier the quotation cited from Gruber where he says '. . .formalizing all of semantics that can be formalized. . .'. The question which arises here is whether phenomena involving usage can be formalized, and if it can, then how? Categories of usage could be established using individual lexical entries, but usage more often results from combinations of lexical entries rather than from individual items. Furthermore, if individual entries are considered in establishing some categories and if categories for usage are not based entirely on individual entries but rather on phrases and sentences, then one needs to find a satisfactory and systematic procedure for marking usage in terms of such relations, for example, as focus.

Since one of the underlying assumptions here is that it is the lexicon that will generate simultaneously a language that is both semantic and syntactic, careful consideration needs to be given not only to the selection of categories but to that part of the base which will generate the culturally meaningful and significant surface level. This part of the base is essential to this theory. Without it, one has only a conglomeration of categorical analysis that can lead no where.

Some of these problems, of course, may never be satisfactorily resolved when analyzing a language other than one's native language. Conceptual categorization of a culture other than one's own is difficult but in the end this kind of analysis, if it can be formalized in some way, appears more significant in terms of providing deeper insights into the complexities of language.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Kusaien is an Austronesian language spoken by approximately 3000 people in the geographic area designated as Micronesia. More

precisely Kusaie is an Eastern Caroline Island, 5 degrees and 20 minutes North latitude and 163 degrees East longitude. I am grateful for the help offered me by my informant and friend, Eleanora Wilson (a native speaker of Kusaien) and her husband, Walter Scott Wilson (Ph.D. Penn), Anthropologist at the University of Guam. My gratitude for their untiring efforts and cooperation on this and other Kusaien projects can never be fully expressed.

[2] Although there is a need to differentiate between the two possible deep structures in terms of the classifier element, i.e. grammatical vs. semantic, there is no need here for the purposes of a discussion of the possessive since both types use the same pronoun suffix system.

[3] That is to say, one never has [kom oaŝ lɔmseyl] 'You have his houses' or [el oaŝ lɔmseyl] 'He has his houses'. This restriction is directly related to the earlier discussion of why it is impossible to write 'the hands which I have' as the embedded form [ŋa bæo].

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